

Norwalk River Watershed News

For Residents of New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston and Wilton, CT and Lewisboro, NY

The Norwalk River Watershed Initiative--What is it?

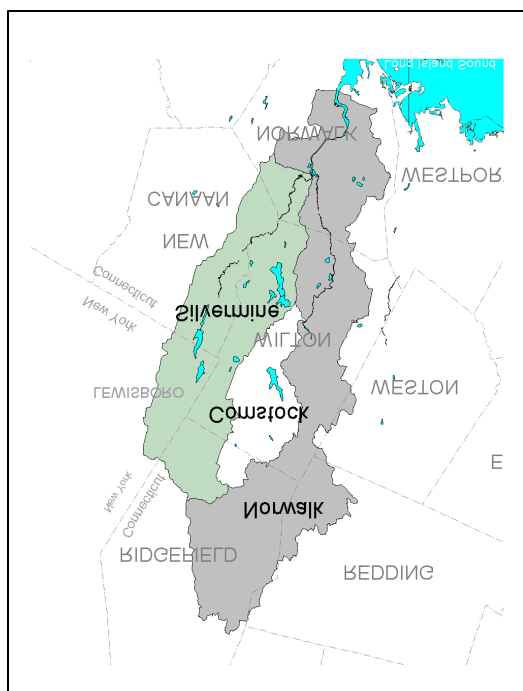
Fall is here, and the Norwalk River Watershed Initiative is well underway. The purpose of the Initiative is to protect and restore the natural resources found within the Norwalk River watershed. To do this, participants in the Initiative will be developing a Watershed Management Plan. The authors of the Plan are the members of the Norwalk River Watershed Initiative Committee (the Committee or NRWIC). Members of the Committee include watershed residents, local officials, interested organizations, and state and federal representatives. Early on, the Committee decided it was necessary to form four subcommittees in order to better focus on the issues affecting the watershed. These are **Education and Stewardship, Habitat Restoration, Land Use/Flood Control/Open Space**, and **Water Quality**. In June, the Committee held a series of public meetings to gather input on their initial goal statements and prioritized lists of issues. Comments were then taken back to the subcommittees over the summer to allow for further refinement of these.

At present, the Committee is undertaking the toughest part of any planning process...reaching consensus on the goals and objectives. However, once this task is completed, they can work to establish the intermittent steps needed to achieve these. In order to check their progress, the Committee will be holding additional public meetings to discuss the directions that the Plan is taking. However, until these dates are set, interested individuals are welcome to attend any of the Committee meetings set for the third Thursday of each month. It's your chance to get involved in something that will impact where you live and work, and where you go for long walks on a fall afternoon.

For more information on the Initiative, the next Committee meeting, and how to get involved, Contact Lisa Carey, Public Outreach Coordinator for the Committee at (203) 327-9786. Or write to her c/o Save the Sound, 185 Magee Ave., Stamford, CT 06902. Or E-mail savethesound@snet.net.

The Norwalk River Watershed is...

All of the land area from which precipitation runs off and drains into the Norwalk River and its tributaries - Comstock Brook and Silvermine River - and ultimately, Long Island Sound. The watershed covers about 40,000 acres or 62 sq. miles in parts of seven communities: New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, and Wilton in CT and Lewisboro, NY. An estimated 65,000 people live in the watershed.



Committee Notes

For the past few months, the subcommittees have met to review public comments obtained from both the public meetings and the surveys that were sent to interested residents.

Revisions were made to the goal statements, and the issues and interests were further prioritized based on public input. The following is a brief summary of proposals being considered by the full Committee.

❖ Education and Stewardship

Chair: Dan Porter (203) 894-8438

The goal statement for education and stewardship remains unchanged based on feedback from the public: *To educate citizens about: 1) the boundaries and functions of the Norwalk River Watershed; 2) the specific needs for protection of and improvement of the river system; 3) the benefits of a healthy watershed to individuals and communities; and 4) the opportunity for the public to speak out on issues, and to participate in the stewardship of the watershed.* The subcommittee is currently developing an educational campaign by creating information packets for watershed residents and businesses. They are also exploring the possibility of having watershed awareness as a curriculum component within watershed school systems.

❖ Habitat Restoration

Chair: Pat Sesto (203) 834-9255

This subcommittee also reviewed public comment and finalized their goal statement: *To restore and conserve habitat features to protect and increase the diversity of floral and faunal species.* Members are currently collecting more information on high quality and degraded habitat sites within the watershed by contacting land trusts, municipalities and environmental groups.

Discussion has also focused on ***riparian zone preservation and restoration*** (this zone is a buffer of vegetation that would normally grow along a river's banks), and the need to establish a minimum width requirement for such a zone. And the subcommittee is researching appropriate sites for the re-establishment of ***anadromous fish passage*** (fish that migrate from salt water to fresh water to spawn) and cold water fisheries.

❖ Land Use/Flood Protection/Open Space

Chair: Dick Carpenter (203) 866-5543

Based on public comments, this subcommittee revisited their objectives within the three issue areas. To date, they have agreed that setting performance standards for different types of development would be the best approach to ensure compatible development that would not adversely impact the watershed. An update was given on work that the CTDEP is doing with the watershed municipalities to implement a flood warning system. They are also exploring the feasibility of creating coordinated town open space plans and funding for open space purchases.

❖ Water Quality

Chair: Dave Dunavan (203) 847-5354

The goal of *"protecting surface and ground water by developing a plan to achieve an improvement in water quality in the watershed"* remained unchanged during the public comment process. The committee is focusing on the non-point pollution problems in the watershed. They are: trying to determine the causes for accelerated ***eutrophication*** (i.e., greening) of lakes and ponds in the basin; investigating the need for an incentive-

based model ordinance for ***septic system maintenance*** for town-wide adoption; and researching potential ***best management practices*** for use by residents, businesses, and municipalities. The subcommittee is also working on developing a water quality monitoring program for the Norwalk River and its tributaries.

Note: For more information on subcommittee goals and objectives, please contact the appropriate subcommittee chair people listed

For additional information on the watershed or the Initiative, you may also contact:

- **Ray Morse, Co-Chair , NRWIC**
(914) 763-5695
- **Pat Sesto, Co-Chair, NRWIC**
(203) 834-9255
- **Tess Gutowski, CT DEP**
(860) 424-3096
- **Mel Cote, EPA**
(617) 565-3537
- **Walter Smith, NRCS**
(860) 487-4040

above.

Funding for the 18-month Initiative is provided by the US EPA, the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service, CT DEP, the Village Bank and Trust Corporation, and the seven watershed towns.

Please contact Lisa Carey at (203) 327-9786 or write her c/o Save the Sound 185 Magee Ave., Stamford, CT 06902 if you wish to have your name removed from the mailing list.